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South Carolina

BULLETIN of the
University of South Carolina

GULLAH

BY

REED SMITH

ISSUED SEMI-MONTHLY
BY THE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION DIVISION

No. 190

Nov. 1, 1926

COLUMBIA, S. C.
Second-Class Mail Matter

[front cover]

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GULLAH

Dedicated to the memory of Ambrose E. Gonzales

∞∞

BY

REED SMITH

[p. 1]

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PREFATORY NOTE

Considerable interest in Gullah dialect has developed, not only in South Carolina, but thruout the country, within the past few years. This interest is due largely to the masterly contribution of the late Ambrose Gonzales. It seems appropriate to the University of South Carolina committee on publications, therefore, to publish this study by Dr. Reed Smith, Professor of English in the University, presenting the technical details of the Gullah dialect.

B. L. PARKINSON, Director.

University Extension Division.

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FOREWORD

121 Gullah, that quaint linguistic mongrel of the black folk
197 of the Carolina-Georgia coast and sea-islands, an English dialect molded by the lips and genius of African slaves, was lifted into the rank of literary languages by Ambrose E. Gonzales by his masterpiece, "The Black Border." Some of the myths and lore of these Negroes had been set down before, but it was left to Gonzales to shape these tales and philosophy into artistic form and contribute them as a positive endowment to our literature. "The Black Border," with its Gullah Vocabulary, has placed this treasure within the easy enjoyment of all readers of English.

128 It was my pleasure and privilege to assist in the preparation of this Vocabulary and in the unification of Gullah words, which, up to that time, existed almost entirely as spoken and unordered vocables. It is now possible for any one, with these Gullah Stories and Vocabulary, to write any English word in a true Gullah form.

121 Dr. Reed Smith has added to these labors the true contribution of the scientist. He has worked out the laws and analogies that unconsciously wrought this quaintly beautiful transformation of English through the mentality and spirit of the slaves in Southern homes. He has placed Gullah upon the plane with our great dialects,—Irish, Scottish, and some of the English idioms.

An examination and reading of Gullah will convince any sincere mind that, in allurement, in sheer beauty of word and phrase, and in a certain winsomeness of its own, it is a permanent enrichment of our language and literature.

STANHOPE SAMS.

Asst. Editor *The State*.

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GULLAH

Historical Background

101 Even to those familiar with the American Negro through the medium of either life or literature, the term Gullah is a little-known word for a less-known people. It is applied to a special group-type of Negroes, limited historically and geographically to the sea-islands and the narrow tidewater strip bordering the coast counties of South Carolina and Georgia and a small section of north-east Florida. The 197 language spoken by these Negroes constitutes a patois unique among the dialects of the United States, and differs from the more familiar upland Negro dialects as written by Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page, as markedly as those dialects differ from the French Creole of Louisiana and the Mississippi Delta.

174 Both the word Gullah and the Negroes so named came 101 from the West Coast of Africa, but exactly where has not been agreed upon. There are two widely-held conjectures. One is that Gullah is a shortened form of Angola, the name of an African West Coast district lying south of the Equator and the mouth of the Congo River.[1] A small but positive bit of evidence to this effect is found in an entry of the Charleston City Council, under the year 1822, in which reference is made to "Gullah Jack" and his company of "Gullah or Angola Negroes." This indicates that, rightly

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[1] This was the opinion of Mr. Ambrose E. Gonzales, a high authority on Gullah and author of the Black Border Series of Gullah stories. This was also the view of the Rev. John G. Williams. In the Preface to his *De Old Plantation*, Allendale, 1898, he wrote: "Gullah is very probably a corruption of Angola, shortened to Gola, a country of West Africa, and a part of Lower Guinea, from which a great many negroes were brought to this country in the days of the slave trade. I remember hearing the old plantation negroes before the war speak of one as a 'Gullah nigger' and another as a 'Guinea nigger'. In Appleton's 'New American Cyclopaedia' the Guinea negroes are described as 'black and having thick lips and flat noses', and the Angola, or 'Gulla' negroes as having 'few of the negro peculiarities of form and feature. They are brown in color'. These differences between negroes in the country have been often noticed and remarked upon frequently, the explanation of which differences is that the 'thick lips' and 'flat noses' point to Ashantee and Dahomey as the places from which their ancestors were brought and the 'brown color' and features more like the European in some negroes, very different from the Guinea, point to Angola or 'Gulla' as the country from which their ancestors came. So deeply fixed are the race and even tribal characteristics. There is history in the word 'Gullah', as it is improperly spelt."

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[174 10] or wrongly, as far back as 1822 the official governing body of the City of Charleston regarded Gullah as a corrupted form of Angola.

A second, more probable suggestion is that Gullah comes from the name of the Liberian group of tribes known as Golas living on the West Coast between Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast. These Golas were formerly numerous and powerful, but have now dwindled to a small remnant tribe dwelling some thirty miles inland from Monrovia, the chief sea-port of Liberia. "The dialect of the West Coast, from which came these Gullah negroes," says a leading authority[1] on the subject, "was early commented upon as peculiarly harsh, quacking, flat in intonation, quick, [10] clipped, and peculiar even in Africa. Bosman, the Dutch sailor, described its peculiar tonality, and calls its speakers the 'quaquas, because they gabbled like geese'."

[124 527] Whether originally from Angola or from Liberia, these Gullah tribesmen after their enforced immigration to our shores formed a distinct and peculiar group. Their resolute and persistent nature evidently assisted in impressing [197] their dialectal characteristics on weaker and more plastic Negroes from elsewhere brought in contact with them, and definitely fixed for two hundred years the tonality of the Negro dialect of the Carolina and Georgia coast.[2]

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[1] Mr. John Bennett of Charleston, author of *Master Skylark*, *Madame Margot*, etc., who has been studying the Gullah language and history for a score of years. His article "Gullah; A Negro Patois" (*The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Part I, Oct., 1908; Part II, Jan., 1909) is a most scholarly and penetrating treatment. The present paper draws deeply from it, as also from the work of Mr. Gonzales. Mr. Bennett feels strongly that the Angola derivation for Gullah is quite without foundation; and reiterates his belief in a personal letter to the writer: "God alone knows all the sources of Gullah, (as a language) its vocables, its accents, etc.; but its *name* came from that odd, primitive people, back of Monrovia, whose name has been spelled various ways, but which, as we have it, is Gullah."

[129] A third derivation, almost certainly wrong, may be mentioned in passing. Rev. Robert Hamill Nassau, M.D., who was for forty years a missionary in the French Congo, thought the Gullahs might come ultimately from a powerful tribe of Camma or Comi Negroes called Gwalla.

[2] Many of these Negroes were brought to the West Indies and the Carolinas at an early date. The earliest were tempered by servitude in the islands of Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, San Domingo, etc., before arrival in Carolina. Later the untempered Africans were brought direct from the West Coast to Charleston.

An instance of the marked individuality and persistence of Gullah, even under adverse conditions, is told by John G. Williams in *De Ole Plantation*, (Preface V.): "More, perhaps, than a hundred years ago certain negroes were carried from a rice plantation in Colleton County and put on a cotton plantation in Barnwell District,

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Of equal importance, if that be possible, with the native quality of the Gullah vernacular, was the environment under which they lived in this country. They seem to have been imported almost exclusively to the sea-islands and coast of two states, South Carolina and Georgia. This section, from Colonial days to the Civil War, was the richest and most cultured of that part of the South. Rice, the chief low-country crop of that day, was extremely lucrative under slave-labor, as was the silky, long-staple sea-island cotton. Large plantations of thousands of acres were the rule, on which the wealthy planters lived in characteristic, often feudal prosperity.[1]

Even today, two generations after the disintegration of the social forces that brought them into existence, there remain impressive traces of these fine old estates, some abandoned and fallen into ruins, a few still kept up, some turned into hunting preserves, some still being farmed on a smaller scale. They stretch in an irregular chain along the coast, inlets, and tidal rivers, each with the gray-weathered dwelling-house in its moss-draped grove of live-oaks; the big barns and slave-quarters off to one side, consisting of a double row of one-story cabins, now in ruins, lining the "street"; square mile after square mile of woodland, marshland, and level fields, once planted to rice, but

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[1] as it was called then, but to this day (1926) the older ones of that set of negroes, who grew up before the war, speak as pure Gullah as their grandfathers and grandmothers spoke on Ashepoo. They seem to have been scarcely affected in their low-country Gullah speech by the white people that were numerous and all around them and the negroes native to that neighborhood, who talked so differently to themselves."

'If this seems to savor of the high-flown idyllic plantation tradition, fostered by professional Southerners, romantic literature, melodrama, and minstrel balladry, be it recalled that the ideal picture came closest to being realized in tide-water Virginia and in the rice districts of South Carolina. In regard to these localities it would be hard to overstate the facts. "Charles Dudley Warner, for example, dazzled by the sheen of life in the Carolina rice districts exclaimed, 'Nowhere in this leveling age . . . so much splendor'." F. P. Gaines, *The Southern Plantation*, Columbia University Press, 1924, p. 64. "Phillips says of the rice section: 'The towns were in sentiment and interest virtually a part of the plantation community and many prospering townsmen looked toward plantation retirement, carrying, as it did, in some degree, the badge of gentility, as the crown of their careers.'" *Ibid.*, 145, 146.

Crevecoeur (*Letters from an American Farmer*, London, 1782.) called the Rio around Charleston 'the gayest in America'; "Olmstead himself (*Seaboard Slave States, A Journey Through the Seaboard Slave States*, New York, 1856) refers to the rice planters as 'having less vulgar display and more intrinsic elegance than in any distinct class among us'." *Ibid.*, p. 154.

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000 now with ditches choked, banks and dam breached by time and tide, grown up in wild rice and marsh grass; the ideal habitat of deer, duck, bob-white, and wild-turkey—the hunter's paradise.

175 Before the war, each plantation was a little world apart.
567 The slaves lived together, segregated in their own special quarters. The Negroes outnumbered the whites in the ratio of tens and hundreds to one, and only the house-servants and body-servants came into close contact with their owners. The large majority of field-hands habitually saw only each other, their overseers, and occasionally a white servant. Grandparents, parents, children, and grand-children succeeded each other on the same plantation, growing up under intimate communal relationships but in almost complete isolation from the outside world. Thus their whole body of traditions, customs, superstitions, language, religion, and mental background remained in a state of arrested development and were handed down practically unchanged.*

175 The Civil War and Freedom made far less difference in their lives than might have been expected. During the strenuous Reconstruction period their dependence and isolation, if anything, increased. The financial and social system of the South was broken up; the white planters and their families were impoverished, and many moved to town or city or even emigrated to the up-country, and the Negroes were left to shift for themselves. There amid the wreckage of great plantations,* in the broom-sedge

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[197] *Concerning the effects of such continued and unusual isolation within the dialect itself, Mr. Bennett remarks: "There are all grades of negroes, from the rudest field hands to residents of villages and house-servants, who speak with very different degrees of inaccuracy and illiteracy. There are, especially among the islands, plantations so remote from all contact with civilisation as once to have developed dialects within the dialect, the characteristic speech and peculiar idioms of one plantation differing so from those of another as to make it very possible for the adept to determine by a negro's peculiarity of dialect what community, sometimes what island, and sometimes almost what plantation was the spokesman's place. Singular peculiarities upon one plantation may be—or once were—totally lacking upon the next holding, though but a few miles distant." I, 336, Note.

[567] *How utter was the wreckage and complete the reversal in many cases may be dimly realized from the following contrasted pictures: "Many folks of the old regime were destroyed by the war—not merely soldiers on the battlefield, but civilians white and black, driven or lured from shelter, sustenance, and sanitation. Slaves died by uncounted thousands, and many of their masters were utterly broken. The

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175 fields, the lonely rice marshes, the windy pine-woods, the dying rice-fields, on the little truck-farms and cotton patches of the lowlands, they remained eking out an existence as best they could, almost as untouched by civilization as if they had still been dwelling in the forests of equatorial Africa.

181 Thus with the passing years, owing both to origin and environment, they have come to constitute a highly specialized group among the Negro population of the South. In common with other Negroes they share in the main Negro characteristics, but in them these characteristics are sharply heightened and accentuated. They are almost unbelievably primitive, childlike, excitedly religious, ignorant, illiterate, humorous, shrewd, shiftless beyond expression, superstitious, unstable, likeable, loyal, full of a homely untutored philosophy, gifted with picturesque speech, humble, kindly, generous, good-natured, and entirely without malice. It hardly need be said that they likewise possess in high degree the universal Negro trait of having two quite separate and distinct sides, one for the white race and one for themselves.' Living close to nature they are

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[567] ease of Thomas Hamilton Couper of 'Hopeton' on the Altamaha River is an example. Sir Charles Lyell, recognizing him as a distinguished fellow-naturalist, paid him a long visit in 1846 and made laudatory notes upon the library, the household, and the plantation with its five hundred slaves. Another pen has left an account of his burial in 1866, after his death in poverty and despair:

'The steps of the church were broken down, so we had to walk up a plank to get in; the roof was fallen in, so that the sun streamed down on our heads; while the seats were all cut up and marked with the names of Northern soldiers, who had been quartered there during the war. . . . . The funeral party arrived. The coffin was in a cart drawn by one miserable horse, and was followed by the Couper family on foot, having come this way from the landing, two miles off. From the cart to the grave the coffin was carried by four old family negroes, faithful to the end.' Ulrich B. Phillips, "Plantations With Slave Labor and Free," *American Historical Review*, July, 1925.

'This trait is of critical importance. The Negro is a superlative actor and pantomimist, and lets the white man see and know just what the Negro wishes him to—and no more.

Failure to take this into account leads to strange conclusions. It is the reason why so many visiting observers, even though earnest and sincere, have received and recorded impressions of the Negro in the South that are highly plausible—and more highly erroneous.

[113] For a shrewd and cynical summing-up of the case, see L. M. Hussey's "Homo Africanus", *The American Mercury*, Jan., 1925. See also Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, University of North Carolina Press, 1925, pp. 6 and 9.

Following are three well-balanced expressions on this point, two looking to the

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learned in woodcraft and the ways of animals and birds and fish, and in quaint similes and shrewd sayings use this knowledge to illustrate their dealings with their own kind, and their relations with the outside world.

In increasing measure, however, good roads, bridges, and free rural schools are bringing in outside influences and the processes of civilization. The numerous hunting clubs in winter and coast resorts in summer are likewise increasing their points of contact with the rest of the State. They are being slowly transformed and conformed, becom-

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present, the third looking toward the past: (1) William Pickens, himself a Negro, says: "Till this day the Negro is seldom frank to the white man in America. He says what he does not mean; he means what he does not say. . . . This is one reason for the great misconception in the white race respecting the desires, ambitions and sentiments of the black." *The New Negro, His Political and Civil Status and Related Essays*, p. 37.

(2) Mr. Gonzales says: "Of all the inscrutable peoples of the Eastern world, none is more secretive than the Negro, nor any so puzzling to the psychologist, for while it is easy to know that deceit lurks behind the mask of engaging frankness with which he seeks to disarm those who doubt him, the exact nature of the deceit can seldom be discerned." Review of Charles C. Jones, *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast*.

(3) Dr. Stanhope Sams, literary editor of "The State", looks to the Negro's past: "There in a dark region beyond the mind and soul of the Negro of the slave plantations that may never be explored. No trained and well equipped psychologist, so far as I know, has ever attempted this magnificent research. Certainly none of the Negro students of the race has seemed to get even so near as white students have approached. So far as I have ever seen in their writings or heard in their speech, Dubois and Booker Washington did not enter that primeval jungle. And it is not possible now, perhaps, to 'restore' this primitive jungle race and lore. It would be a far more difficult task than the restoration of Kish or Ur, or to bring back to earth some semblance of the mysterious Sumerians. There we have at least a tablet or stele or monument to help; but we must decipher the Negro of the days of the Pharaohs and of Carthage and of the impenetrable backward and abysm of time that stretches like an uncharted sea behind the African Negro from the modern Negro in America or Africa.

"At all events, as it seems, the contact he must have had with cultured Egyptians and Carthaginians left no enduring record. It is possible—despite some vague beginnings of civilization in certain parts of Black Africa—that the only lasting betterment in conditions the Negro has yet known or held has been received during and since he became a slave in the Southern States.

"It remains an alluring, but a chimerical adventure—this attempt to learn what the Negro was before his contact with us.

"On their own part, the Negroes seem to have formed a conspiracy of silence. Possibly they suffered too profoundly, were hurt too bitterly, to tell us their own story. They preferred, doubtless, to leave it behind them in the engulfing and obliterating jungle. They must have known, must have remembered, those first slaves, and they have always had the genius for story-telling and singing. Yet they tell no stories that reveal their previous march, sing no songs—except with borrowed music, and fill their mythologies with the animals and beings of the world that bound and enslaved them."

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ing less like their forbears and more like their contemporaries. Under this slow but sure leveling process their local characteristics and regional traits are gradually fading into uniformity with the common average of their kind and color.

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LITERARY BACKGROUND

000 It is a matter of common knowledge how frequently and sympathetically the short-story of local color and the dialect sketch have dealt with the Negro in the past as the white man saw him, particularly with the idealized family servant type of the old South. The climax of achievement came over a generation ago, in the eighties, with Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page first in time and first in the hearts of their countrymen. This is not the occasion for a survey of the Negro in fiction,[1] but no one could even glance in that direction and fail in passing to say a word of gratitude to the creators[2] of Uncle Remus and of Marse Chan. There should also be recalled the brilliant pioneer in Negro dialect poetry, Irwin Russell of Mississippi and Missouri. Though he died in 1879 at the age of 26, with his greatest work still to do, the power of his originality and influence were accorded generous recognition by both Harris and Page. These three, with Harry Stillwell Edwards of Georgia and F. Hopkinson Smith of Virginia, are still leaders in the traditional school.

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[1] For a comprehensive bibliographical survey of this kind, see Gaines, *The Southern Plantation*, Chapters II to IV, pp. 18-94, dealing with the development of the plantation conception and tradition in literature.

[2] The word "creators" is used advisedly. As Gaines observes: "The dawning light had brightened throughout a decade but the perfect day of plantation literature was ushered in by Uncle Remus. Harris, it seems, stumbled unconsciously upon a delightful field of folk-lore, and, incidentally, recorded with unusual accuracy of feeling a unique dialect; but what charmed the public was not a new expression of fables, not a new treasury of linguistic values, but the winsome figure of the old darky and the associations of his personality. Uncle Remus did more than tell stories; he reflected a regime; and in so doing, he opened a door widely, completely, to a spacious chamber of literary values. . . . Four years after Uncle Remus came the first of Page's stories, Marse Chan [*The Century*, April, 1884]; and in the next three or four years the Virginian brought out some of the most significant plantation fiction." *Ibid.*, p. 74.

On the same point Mr. Gonzales observes: "The genius of Joel Chandler Harris, who, with Judge Longstreet and his 'Georgia Scenes' fixed Georgia firmly upon the literary map of the world, embalmed the Negro myths and folk-tales of the South so subtly in the amber of his understanding that 'Uncle Remus' is known and loved by the children of half the civilized world. There was little creative work in 'Uncle Remus'. Mr. Harris claimed to record the stories only 'like hit wer' gun' ter me'. These myths were known and told by Negro nurses to the white children over all the Southern states, and in the West Indian Islands as well, but the artistry of Harris lay in the sympathetic understanding of children prompted by his kindly heart, and the human appeal of the tender relations of 'the little boy' and the old Negro family servant was irresistible, not only to the children, but to those happy grown-ups who loved them." *The Black Border*, Foreword, pp. 12, 14.

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000 Since their day, many writers have depicted various phases of Negro life and character, ranging from the broad comedy of Octavus Roy Cohen to the sombre psychological sketches of Mrs. Julia Peterkin, the penetrating analysis of DuBose Heyward, and the problem note of T. S. Stribling and Clement Wood.

114 197 To come to the Gullah dialect in particular, owing to the peculiar difficulties of representing its sounds in written speech,[1] its appearances in literature have been gradual and infrequent, and up to the last few years have met with comparatively small popular acclaim. What seem to be its only three ante-bellum echoes are Mrs. Caroline Gilman's *Recollections of a Southern Matron*, Charleston, 1837;[2] Jupiter, in Poe's "Gold Bug," 1843;[3] and William Gilmore Simms' three stories "The Snake of the Cabin," "The Lazy Crow," and "Caloya, or the Loves of the Driver," appearing in 1845 and 1846.[4]

114 533 Within a few years after the close of the war there appeared several important contributions by Northerners whom the war had brought into first-hand contact with Negro plantation music.[5] The earliest was a carefully edited collection, *Slave Songs of the United States*, New York, 1867. These songs were gathered mainly at Port Royal, S. C., between 1861 and 1865, by officers of the Federal army and mission teachers, and were accompanied with prefatory comment on dialect and music by W. F. Allen, C. P. Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison. In the

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[1] This difficulty exists not only for the writers but for the readers as well. It will probably always keep Gullah from becoming as popular as the easier, upland dialects of Harris and Page.

[2] In her Preface Mrs. Gilman says: "Some apology may be necessary, as a matter of taste, for the frequent introduction of the Negro dialect, but the careful reader will perceive that it has only been done when essential to the development of individual character."

[3] The peculiar genius that could create "Ulalume" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" was not fitted to depict a Negro successfully. Jupiter's characterization, however, is better done than his dialect, which is not so bad for Gullah as it would be if it were an attempt at the upland dialect.

[4] Published in the collection entitled *The Wigwam and the Cabin*, in two parts, New York. As to the authenticity of these stories, Simms says in the Prefatory Advertisement: "I have mostly drawn from living portraits, and in frequent instances from actual scenes and circumstances within the memories of men."

[5] See also Gaines, *The Southern Plantation*, p. 138.

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same year appeared Thomas Wentworth Higginson's essay on Negro Spirituals in the *Atlantic Monthly*, later included in his *Army Life in a Black Regiment*."

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One of the first serious attempts to reduce the Gullah dialect to writing was made by Mrs. A. M. H. Christensen, of Beaufort, who, though a Northerner by birth, both caught the Negro's point of view and mastered the difficult dialect. Two or three years before the advent of Uncle Remus, she published a South Carolina Sea Island version of "De Wolf, de Rabbit an' de Tar Baby," in the *Springfield Republican*, and followed it with several other similar tales in the *New York Independent*. Her book of fables, however, *Afro-American Folk Lore*, was not published till 1892."

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Meanwhile Joel Chandler Harris, encouraged by the cordial reception of his first series of Uncle Remus stories," included in his second volume, *Nights With Uncle Remus*, 1881, a few Gullah stories put into the mouth of "Daddy Jack." These were not particularly successful, for Harris did not have the same intimate knowledge of the low-country darkey as he had of his up-country prototype, and

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"Boston, 1870, Chapter IX.

"Its full title is *Afro-American Folk Lore, Told Round Cabin Fires on the Sea Islands of South Carolina*, J. G. Cupples Co., Boston, 1892. It consists of an introductory poem by John G. Whittier, "Song of Negro Boatmen at Port Royal," a six page preface dated November 1891, and eighteen animal fables, totaling 116 pages. A second edition was issued by the author in Boston in 1898, from 200 copies of which Whittier's poem was omitted.

In a personal letter of April 15, 1926, Mrs. Christensen wrote concerning her book: "The first edition was partly arranged for in 1882, with a Boston publisher, but before the illustrations, etc., were decided on, the advent of my fourth son delayed proceedings. Just then appeared the first volume by Joel Chandler Harris. Uncle Remus had forestalled me. For several years I had been occasionally publishing my stories in the New York Independent, so some friends amused themselves by calling me 'the original Uncle Remus'.

"Not till 1892 did I again arrange for publishing, this time with the J. G. Cupples Company, Boston. Only two hundred copies were published before the firm failed. Then, years later, Lee and Shepard published the same stories in small, less expensive style, bound in red cloth."

"In the Introduction to *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings*, 1880, Harris quotes (XIII, XIV) a coast version of B'er Deer an' B'er Cooter, taken from Charles F. Harrt's *Amazonian Tortoise Myths*, William Scully, Rio de Janeiro, 1875, p. 12, which took it from *The Riverside Magazine*, November, 1868. The story is included to show the difference between the dialect of the cotton plantations (which Uncle Remus speaks) and that of the rice plantations and Sea Islands. The same story is contained in *The Nation* (New York), Feb. 23, 1871, p. 127.

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neither Daddy Jack's personality nor dialect ever approximated the appeal and charm of Uncle Remus. Of this dialect Harris remarks in his Introduction: "It is the negro dialect in its most primitive state—the 'Gullah' talk of some of the negroes on the Sea Islands, being merely a confused and untranslatable mixture of English and African words."

The most notable early success in Gullah was won by Charles Colcock Jones, Jr., of Georgia, in *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast*, 1888. Colonel Jones, a careful lawyer, handled the dialect correctly, and recorded with great exactness and without embellishment the stories as they were told him on the plantation." His collection, like that of Mrs. Christensen, contains the earlier analogs of many of the Uncle Remus stories.

How directly and immediately these Georgia and South Carolina coast tales are derived from African originals may be gathered from Mrs. Christensen's description of her collection as "comprised of verbatim reports from numerous sable story-tellers of the Sea-Islands, some of whose ancestors, two generations back, brought parts of the legends from African forests."[1]

During the decades following the work of Harris, Page, Jones, and Mrs. Christensen, the short-story of local color and the regional genre sketch became widely prevalent,

[1] Mr. Gonzales authoritatively says of his work: "One familiar with Negro speech recognizes that these tales are recorded as they fell from Negro lips, and as such they must be regarded, as far as they go, as the most authentic record of Negro myths on the continent—probably the originals of many of the 'Uncle Remus' stories, for the slaves first came from Africa to the coast, bringing with them their myths and legends which gradually infiltrated into the hinterland." *The Black Border*, Foreword, p. 16.

[2] See her Preface, XII, XIII. Her informant gives the following account of the source of his stories, (which will likewise serve as a sample of Mrs. Christensen's Gullah dialect): "But I was gwine to tell you 'bout my ol' gran'daddy. I often yearly him tell how 'e was bring ober from Arfrica in a ship when 'e was a boy. De white man lef' de ship behin' and went asho' in a small boat; an' when dey meet up wid my gran'daddy an' a whole parcel more, young boys like, all from de same village, dey hire dem wid piece ob red flannel an' ting far go lung wid dem. But when dey git dem on ba'd de ship dey bring dem ober to dis country an' sell dem for slave. Dey bring my gran'daddy to Charleston an' ol' Marse Heywood buy um. When I was a small kettle boy 'e len berry ol', too ol' for work, an' I use for hab it for my tarsk for mine um. So 'e tell me heap o' dese story, ef I only could 'member um, dat 's use to yearly way ober in Arfrica." Pages 4, 5.

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Negro life and character coming in for its full share of attention. Along with the stream of stories in the traditional vein and in the conventional Negro dialect of fiction," a trickle of Gullah stories and sketches has likewise been produced." Within the last few years in South Caro-

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"See Gaines, *The Southern Plantation*, pp. 62-94.

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"Its literary appearances, listed chronologically by stages, are these:

I.

Mrs. Caroline Gilman, *Recollections of a Southern Matron*, Charleston, 1837.

Edgar Allen Poe, "The Gold Bug," 1843.

William Gilmore Simms, "The Snake of the Cabin," "The Lazy Crow," and "Caloya: or the Loves of the Driver," in *The Wigwam and the Cabin*, New York, 1845, 1846.

Slave Songs of the United States. A. Simpson and Co., New York, 1867; collected mainly at Port Royal, S. C., between 1861 and 1865, by officers of the Federal army and mission teachers, with prefatory comment on dialect and music by W. F. Allen, C. P. Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison.

II.

Joel Chandler Harris, "Daddy Jack" stories in *Nights With Uncle Remus*, 1881.

Charles Colcock Jones, Jr., *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast Told in the Vernacular*, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1888; reprinted by The State Co., 1925. 192 pp., 61 fables, 3 page glossary.

Rev. John G. Williams, *De Old Plantation*, pamphlet reprint by Walker, Evans and Cogswell Co. of the "Brudder Coteny's Sermons" originally appearing in the Charleston News and Courier and Sunday News. 68 pp., 15 sermons, and 2 sketches, written down during 1896 in Allendale.

Mrs. A. M. H. Christensen, *Afro-American Folk Lore, Told Round Cabin Fires on the Sea Islands of South Carolina*, Boston, 1892. IX-XIV, 116 pp., 18 fables.

J. Jenkins Hucks, *Plantation Negro Sayings on the Coast of South Carolina in Their Own Vernacular*, pamphlet printed by Charles W. Rouse, Georgetown, S. C., 1899 or 1900. Afterwards withdrawn from circulation by the author; to be reissued in enlarged form by the author's son, Dr. Herbert M. Hucks.

F. M. Cronise and H. W. Ward, *Cunnie Rabbit, Mr. Spider, and the Other Beef: West African Folk-Tales*, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London; E. P. Dutton & Co., N. Y., 1903. Exemplary tales, with brief prefatory commentary, including remarks on the dialect in Sierra Leone. Valuable for comparison with Carolina Gullah.

John Bennett, "Gullah: A Negro Patois," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Oct., 1908, Part I, pp. 332-347; Jan., 1909, Part II, pp. 39-52. A scholarly article on the dialect, in two parts.

III.

Within the last few years works have appeared, notable both in number and quality:

Ambrose E. Gonzales, *The Black Border, Gullah Stories of the Carolina Coast*, The State Co., 1922. 348 pp., 12 page Foreword, 42 stories, Gullah Glossary, Appendix (The Tar-Baby Story as told by Charles Colcock Jones, Jr., and by Joel Chandler Harris).

With Sam Along the Black Border, July, 1924. IX-XIV, 298 pp., 60 fables, animal silhouettes by John Bennett.

The Captain, Stories of the Black Border, October, 1924. VII-XVI, 384 pp., 24 stories, 3 illustrations.

Laguerre, A Gascon of the Black Border, December, 1924. VII-XVI, 318 pp., 19 stories, 3 illustrations.

Mrs. Jane Screven Heyward, *Brown Jackets*, The State Co., 1923. 64 pp., 12 sketches.

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114 538 lina there has been a rather surprising re-awakening of interest in Gullah, resulting in a large amount of excellent work.

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113 Sadie E. Stewart, "Seven Folk-Tales from the Sea Islands, South Carolina," *JAFL*, XXXII, 394-396.

Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-Tales of the Sea Islands, South Carolina*, Memoir XVI of American Folk-Lore Society, 1923. XXV and 218 pp.

J. Palmer Lockwood, *Darkey Sermons from Charleston County*, The State Co., 1925. 45 pp., 3 sermons. ("Not the unadulterated Gullah of the rice-fields, but the patois of the negro who occasionally goes to Town." (I.e. Charleston.)

Dubose Heyward, *Porgy*, Geo. H. Doran Co., 1925, 196 pp.

Marcellus S. Whaley, *The Old Types Pass*, Christopher Pub. Co., 1925. V and 192 pp., 26 tales and sketches, glossary of 1500 words and 42 idioms; 8 songs with music; 8 illustrative sketches.

Saint Helena Island Spirituals, Recorded and Transcribed at Penn Normal, Industrial and Agricultural School, by N. G. J. Ballanta of Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa, G. Schirmer, Inc., 1925. Foreword V-XVIII, 90 pp., 113 spirituals.

IV.

Neither in dialect nor specifically and exclusively about the Negro, there are many books dealing with the history and background of the Carolina coast which are both interesting and useful as concerning the authentic low-country setting and atmosphere. Numbers three to eight are war-time pictures.

Charles Colcock Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes* (from their first introduction into this country in 1620 to the year 1842), Thomas Purse, Savannah, 1842. 277 pp. (The author is the father of the author of *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast.*)

Mrs. Henry R. Schoolcraft, *The Black Gauntlet: A Tale of Plantation Life in South Carolina*, J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia, 1860. 360 pp.

Lieut.-Col. Freemantle, *Three Months in the Southern States, April-June 1863*, William Blackwood & Sons, London, 1863. Pages 179-206 deal with the Carolina low-country.

J. T. Trowbridge, *The South*, L. Stebbins, Hartford, Conn., 1866. Pages 511-545 on Charleston and Sea Islands.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, Fields, Osgood and Co., Boston, 1870. 291 pp. Chapter IX on Negro Spirituals.

Frances Butler Leigh, *Ten Years on a Georgia Plantation Since the War*, Richard Bentley & Son, London, 1883. This is an implicit comment, almost an *amende*, on the book of her famous mother, Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation in 1838-1839*.

Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands*, Boston, Lee and Shepherd, 1893. 286 pp.

Letters from Port Royal, Written at the Time of the Civil War, ed. by Elizabeth Ware Pearson, Boston, 1906.

Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne, Written from the Sea Islands of South Carolina, 1862-1884, ed. Rupert Sargent Holland, Cambridge, 1912. 310 pp.

"Patience Pennington" (Mrs. Elizabeth W. Allston Pringle), *A Woman Rice Planter*, Macmillan Co., 1913. 447 pp.

I. Jenkins Mikell, *Rumbling of the Chariot Wheels*, The State Co., 1923. 273 pp.

Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, Harvard University Press, 1925. Incidental Gullah Songs pages 168, 175, 184, 190, 196, 254, 256.

James Henry Rice, Jr., *Glories of the Carolina Coast*, R. L. Bryan Co., 1925. 180 pp.

Archibald Rutledge, *Tom and I on the Old Plantation*. Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1918; *Plantation Game Trails*, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921; *Old Plantation Days*, Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1921; *Heart of the South*, The State Co., 1924; *Days Off in Dixie*; Doubleday, Page & Co., 1924.

Herbert Ravenel Sass, *The Way of the Wild*, 1925; *Adventures in Green Places*, 1926, Minton, Balch & Co.

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The most important contribution in this field consists of the four recent volumes comprising the "Black Border Series," by Ambrose E. Gonzales, of Columbia, S. C." This series contains a total of one hundred and forty-five sketches and stories and totals over thirteen hundred pages. Its chief interest for the general reader lies along literary lines, but in addition to its literary values, the series is an important contribution to philology. A large [197] proportion of the narrative is related in authentic Gullah dialog, which Mr. Gonzales handles with a charm and mastery not attained by any other writer."

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[113] "*The Black Border, Gullah Stories of the Carolina Coast*, 1922. *With Knop Along the Black Border*, July, 1924. *The Captain, Stories of the Black Border*, October, 1924. *Laguerre, A Gascon of the Black Border*, December, 1924. All four published by The State Co., Columbia, S. C.

See *my review, American Speech*, July, 1926.

Mr. Gonzales was peculiarly fitted to write Gullah. He is the grandson of a rice-planter. He was nursed by a faithful Negro mauma; as a child was waited upon by and played with Negroes; he hunted and fished with them. These long and familiar relationships have given him a rarely comprehensive and sympathetic understanding of the Negro temperament, which to the value of his work as literature add the authenticity of history and sociology.

In this connection it is interesting to note that Theodore D. Jervey in the closing chapter of his *The Slave Trade, Slavery and Color*, (The State Co., 1925), quotes from *The Black Border* in order to establish a desired argument. And the twelve sketches in *The Captain* (pp. 111-298), dealing with an attempted land settlement by Negroes in 1873, possess a charm and authenticity alike remarkable.

The flaw in many an otherwise good Negro dialect-story—and I am not now referring to those lamentable performances in which the crime is committed of making a darkey use the word "you-all" and mean thereby one person instead of a group of persons—but stories in which plot, setting and dialect are unimpeachably handled—the weakness is that the point of view is still Caucasian. The characters think, speak, and act like white people disguised for the nonce as Negroes; the hand is the hand of Ham but the voice is the voice of Japheth.

"To his skill in this respect, two fellow-writers of Gullah who have themselves successfully wrestled with its difficulties pay enthusiastic tribute. "As Ambrose Gonzales writes Gullah it is a dialect alive, full of graphic humor, and vividly grotesque; stripped and divested of its interior freight of fun, I think the text upon the page would still be humorous; the very type would go pranking by like the crowds at Mardi Gras." John Bennett, Review of *The Black Border*.

"Mr. Gonzales's Gullah is as perfect as it can be written, and he is easily the first honor man in that school. The low-country negro's description of a jackass to a negro who had never seen a jackass: ''E look same like mule, only mo' so,' is almost true of Mr. Gonzales's Gullah." John G. Williams, *De Old Plantation*, V, VI.

On July 11, 1926, since this article was written, death stilled the gifted pen of Mr. Gonzales forever. He achieved The Black Border Series under tremendous, well-nigh insuperable difficulties, the details of which are contained in a personal letter of his to a friend in Charleston, Dec. 30, 1924. The stroke which he refers to as slight was in reality severe: it impeded his walking, thickened his speech, and made writing a slow and laborious process. "As soon as I was up from a slight stroke I suffered in May, 1922," he wrote, "I set to work on the foreword and glossary of *The Black Border*, and brought out the book under handicaps that would have broken a spirit

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less inured to disappointment. As soon as the book was out—I had to give the proofs seventeen readings—I started to edit and bring out *In Darkest Cuba*. . . . . Realizing last January that my time was short, I promised myself that if I lived, I would publish three books this year and, thank the Lord, I've managed to do it.

"On the thousand pages, more than nine hundred have been written since August of last year—written slowly and painfully, with a pencil on Sundays and at nights, while tired and worn out by my nine or ten hours at The State—duties I never miss.

"Now I'm through with dinbert *for* a while. Each of these *four Black Border* books has its place, and I think they will live because of their sincerity and simplicity —but time will show."

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THE DIALECT

What the Gullahs seem to have done was to take a sizeable part of the English vocabulary as spoken on the coast by the white inhabitants from about 1700 on, wrap their tongues around it, and reproduce it changed in tonality, pronunciation, cadence, and grammar to suit their native phonetic tendencies, and their existing needs of expression and communication. The result has been called by one writer "the worst English in the world". It would certainly seem to have a fair claim to that distinction. To understand it requires a trained ear, and at first blush it is equally unintelligible to white people and colored people alike.

"The ordinary reader," says Mr. Bennett, "may not always catch the meaning; the shapes of the words are strange; they are the residuum of language literally worn away by use; the phonology is archaic; the engaged grammar a mystery; to the wit and to the acute phonetic sense of the reader much must inevitably be left."[1]

It is easy to understand the bewilderment of a northern visitor to the South just after the war who fell in with a crowd of Negro refugees on the wharves in Charleston. "I tried to converse with others," he writes, "who spoke a wild jargon peculiar to the plantations, of which I understood hardly one word in ten."[2] White housekeepers in Georgetown, Charleston, and Beaufort have been heard at the present day to lament the fact that they could not understand their own cooks, which is but one way of confessing that they are not native, but have moved in from the up-country.

One of the funniest things I ever saw was a fashionable colored nurse-maid from the up-country listening for the first time to a Gullah cook and a Gullah fisherman on Pawley's Island arguing over the price of a string of fish. As the flood of Gullah vocables burst around her ears the up-country negro's expression was a study in mingled amazement and incredulity: she couldn't believe her own ears!

[1] I, 377.
[2] J. T. Trowbridge, *The South*, L. Stebbins, Hartford, Conn., 1866, p. 538.

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695 A case in point will be enlightening. Here is a verbatim account" of the testimony in a suit brought in connection with a collision between two sail-boats in a heavy fog. The defendant asserted that no warning of any kind had been given.

695 539 197 "That is not so," the plaintiff declared. "My lookout gave warning in ample time; he hailed you long before you struck, and ran us down; you had ample warning."

The lookout was summoned, a black man, sphinx-like, silent.

"You called out to the defendant the moment you saw him through the fog?"

"Me yerre um; no shum; *too* long buffo' me shum, me yerre um.""

"And the moment you heard them you sang out, is that not so?"

A grave nod assented.

The plaintiff rested his case; the cross-examination began:

"You hailed the sloop before you could see her; could they hear you hail?"

A succinct nod.

"How do you know?"

"Me yerre dem; dem blan fuh yerre we; yez yerre yondeh senkah yerre yuh.""

"You hailed them then?"

"Me duh holleh."

"That is what I mean: you hailed the on-coming vessel?"

"Me yent no sicarum; me holleh one patty-augah.""

"Very well. And what did you say?"

"Me say, 'Oonah konnou oonah?'"

Which is equivalent, in Gullah, to *"Whose boat is that?"* The records will show the outcome of the case; the writer has not the verdict recorded.

197 Again, in briefer scope, a deer hunter asked an old darkey if a certain stand was a good one for deer. "Me yent kin say, mossa," replied the old man, "W'en oona duh de-dey, de dee' duh no de-day; w'en oona yent dey, de dee' duh de-dey." That is, "When one is there, the deer is not there; when one is not there, the deer is there."

191 It is only fair to say that the low-country darkeys are

"Bennett I, 240, 241.

""I heard him (them); I didn't see him (them); too long *before* I saw him (them); I heard him (them)."

"I heard them; they (were) obliged to hear me; cars hear yonder cause us hear dem."

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191 on their part just as much interested in and amused by up-country talkers, white or black. Plantation Negroes delight, though not appearing to do so, to watch a visiting stranger: "Dey use dem mout' so funny!"[a]

197 To come to the dialect itself, and to single out some of
212 its most interesting features,[b] be it always kept in mind that Gullah is uniformly a spoken not a written speech. It lacks entirely any of the influences associated with writing or printing. It is untouched by the scratch of a pen save as it was recorded in transit, so to speak, by Mrs. Christensen, Colonel Jones, Mr. Gonzales, and others.

197 Both on this account and also because it has had to mud-
dle along without the standardizing effects of education, in it all the leveling and simplifying processes possible to
19 language have had free sway." Furthermore, when it was first formulated as a medium of communication between master and slave, it was almost certainly a highly simpli-

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[a] Bennett I, 340.

[b] In this connection two important preliminary comments should be made.

(1) It is not meant that these features are unique in Gullah: some are, but many are not. Many of the grammatical usages, pronunciations, popular etymologies, proverbs, etc., are found in similar dialects elsewhere, and occasionally in general Negro usage or even in white usage in the South. For example F. M. Cronise and H. W. Ward, *Cunnie Rabbit, Mr. Spider, and the Other Beef: West African Folk-Tales*, E. P. Dutton, N. Y., 1903, gives the Sierra Leone Negro dialect wherein may be found many interesting parallels with Gullah. Compare also the remarks of Professor Krapp below, Note 46. Parsons, also, (Preface XVII) gives several Bahaman parallels such as *day-clean*, *man* as a form of address, *do* as a supplicatory exclamation, and in Note 5 mentions further Sierra Leone parallels, *um* (them), *fee* (very), *aintee* (South Carolina *enty*), *nye* (eye), *titty*, (sister), and *oonuh* (you).

Likewise Mr. Bennett throughout his two articles (especially I, pp. 346, 347) calls attention to various parallels in Middle and Elizabethan English and in the peasant usage of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Sussex and Kent.

(2) Again, there was (and is) no standard Gullah in the sense that there is a standard literary English. As Mr. Bennett explains: "Gullah has its variants, as naturally followed from the constrained remoteness of distant plantations and absence of intercourse; phrases heard on the Altamaha are unknown upon the Santee; words in use in the Georgetown District vanish at Edisto; John's Island is not St. Helena's; Silk Hope was not Toogoodoo." (I, 341). Moreover, the particular method of reducing the dialect to writing, especially the degree to which phonetic spelling is carried, causes many variations among the different writers of the dialect. It is interesting to compare, for example, the Beaufort Gullah of Mrs. Christensen and John G. Williams, the Georgetown Gullah of J. Jenkins Hucks, the Combahee Gullah of Gonzales, the St. Helena dialect of Parsons, and the Edisto dialect of Marcellus S. Whaley.

An interesting example of the differences in Negro dialects is contained in Addison Hibbard's "Æsop in Negro Dialect," *American Speech*, June, 1926.

[c] Writing in 1867, W. F. Allen, one of the compilers of *Slave Songs in the United States*, says: "With these people the process of 'phonetic decay' appears to have gone as far, perhaps, as is possible."

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19 fied form of English," both in phonology, grammar, and vocabulary, with elision of difficult sounds, shortening of words, modification of every difficult enunciation, and a minimum of forms for person, number, case, and tense.

Thus, simple to begin with and uniformly responsive to all possible leveling influences, Gullah is as nearly an uninflected tongue as it is possible to conceive.

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19 195 567 [George Philip Krapp in "The English of the Negro" (*American Mercury*, June, 1925) gives the following conjectural picture of its origins: "The assimilation of the language of the Negroes to the language of the whites did not take place all at once. Though the historical evidence is not as full as might be wished, the stages can be followed with some certainty. When the Negroes were first brought to America they could have known no English. Their usefulness as servants, however, required that some means of communication between master and slave should be developed. There is little likelihood that any masters exerted themselves to understand or to acquire the native language of the Negroes in order to communicate with them. On the contrary, from the very beginning the white overlords addressed themselves in English to their black vassals. It is not difficult to imagine the kind of English this would be. It would be a very much simplified English—the kind of English some people employ when they talk to babies. It would probably have no tenses of the verb, no distinctions of case in nouns or pronouns, no marks of singular or plural. Difficult sounds would be eliminated, as they are in baby talk. Its vocabulary would be reduced to the lowest possible elements. In short, it would be a language of very much the same kind as those which have developed elsewhere under similar circumstances. It would have resemblances to the Beach-la-Mar of the Western Pacific, the Pidgin English of China, and the Chinook jargon of western America. As the Negroes imported into America came from many unrelated tribes, speaking languages so different that one tribe could not understand the language of another, they themselves were driven to the use of this infantile English in speaking to one another."

See also a similar account by James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, The Viking Press, 1925, pp. 42, 43.

The actual historical picture is thus sketched by Mr. Bennett: "At the time of the arrival of these negroes in the American provinces a considerable proportion of the population was composed of white bond-men, indentured mechanics and 'redemptioners', the laborers of the colony, among whom the newly-arrived negroes learned their English. Their vocabularies were small and very markedly dialectal, in the majority of instances a dialect which had been handed down from father to son for several generations, preserving closely the peculiarities of earlier times, in many cases Elizabethan and Jacobean.

"The Africans, plastic as they are by nature, quickly lost their own language, and acquired imperfectly the dialects of the British peasantry among whom they worked, and by whom very generally they were directed. The main reason was, perhaps, that, at the height of the trade, owing to the danger of conspiracy, large groups of negroes upon great plantations and in any considerable establishments, were generally made up, by preference, of negroes of different tribes, speaking languages and dialects unknown to one another. They were mostly young, for youth retains no lasting memories and acquires a new language with greater ease.

"The new negroes were parcelled out among the early bond-servants, and, later, among the trained servants, preventing their congregating in a body, hastening their familiarity with their new duties, and more quickly learning the language of their monitors and wardens. This plan was operative from very early days in obliterating the many African dialects and tongues native to the Negro slaves." Personal letter to Professor Yates Snowden, of the University of South Carolina, Jan. 23, 1918.

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Short Cuts

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The simple form *run*, for example, does duty for "run, runs, is or are running, has or have run, ran, etc.", singular and plural of all tenses. *'Ee* serves interchangeably for "he, she or it"; *'e dead; 'e hab chile* (of a mother); *'e cry; 'e kick* (of a mule); *'e freeze; 'e hot; 'e rain; 'e gwine wedduh* (of an approaching storm). Similarly *'um* stands for all objective case forms of the third person pronoun: *'e tief 'um* (steals or stole it or them); *'e lick 'um* (of wife, child, or mule); *'e bu'n 'um; uh done 'um; uh shoot 'um.*

Distinctions of gender,[84] even in the pronoun, are likewise lacking. As Harris succinctly remarks: "It (Gullah) recognizes no gender, and scorns the use of the plural number except accidentally."[85] For example, a country darkey boarding the train near Georgetown handed the conductor two tickets, and was asked whom they were for. *"Dis one fuh him"* (pointing to his wife), *"and dis one fuh we,"* pointing to himself. A visitor to the office of a masculine attorney who had stepped out for a moment was told by the Georgetown darkey office boy: "She is out; 'e yent come back, not yit; him soon will."[86]

'Ee see 'um or the syncopated form *'Ee shum* may have any of the twenty-four possibilities

He She It	sees saw	her him it them

Depending upon its inflection and accent, *shum* by itself

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[84]Compare Mrs. Parsons' statement: "There is, too, the same confusion of gender and of number, based, I surmise, upon indifference in Africa to these linguistic distinctions. The persistence of the indifference in Negro dialects, in English, French, and Portuguese, is an interesting fact in the psychology of language." *Folk Lore of the Sea Islands*, Preface, XX.

[85]*Nights With Uncle Remus*, Intro., XXXIII.

[86]Mr. Bennett is likewise authority for the following uniquely practical explanation of sex and gender: "An old Negro was asked about the difference between the masculine and feminine genders and replied: 'O, yes; me yis know dat. W'en 'oman eat mahry (married) 'e a male; w'en 'e mahry 'im bun uh female."

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193 may mean "See it, him, them?" The height of laconicism is achieved in

"Shum?"
"Shum!"

Uh yeddy 'um but 'uh ent shum may have any of the sixty-four possible combinations:

I {hear / heard} {it / her / him / them} but I {didn't / don't} see {it / her / him / them}

One of the most convenient and expressive words in Gullah is the interrogative or affirmative exclamation *enty*, equivalent to the German *Nichtwahr* or the French *N'est-ce pas?* It means "isn't, aren't, didn't, doesn't, don't, you, she, it, they, we," etc., etc. *Enty you shum?* or *You shum, enty?*

Gullah "A"

194 To unaccustomed ears, the most characteristic and peculiar sound in Gullah is the prevalence of the narrow or flat sound of *a* as in "at" "hat" "bat", drawled or prolonged to *"aa"*. This sound on Gullah tongue represents both the median and broad *a* sounds, and gives *paa't* for both path or part; *smaa't* for smart; *cyaa't* for cart; *haa't* for heart; and similarly *shaa'p, baa'n, maa'k, staa't, daa'k, yaa'd*, etc. As Mr. Bennett remarks: "To hear a small black girl, striving after the higher education but forever indelibly saturated with Gullah, recite the inspired line, 'Hark! hark! the lark!' as 'Haa'k! haa'k! de laa'k!' is inevitably to smile.""

Conversely the narrow or flat sound of *a* as in "fat", "hat," "rat," etc., is broadened to *o* or *ah*," giving *ha(h)t* for hat, *ca(h)t* for cat, *ba(h)g* for bag, and *ba(h)k, cra(h)k, fa(h)c'* and *ma(h)n* for back, crack, fact, and man. By this reversal of *a* sounds, curious results follow.

"Bennett II, 42.
"Not exclusively Gullah, but also impeccable white low-country usage.

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Thus, a "smart man" becomes a *smaa't ma(h)n*, and a "dark bag" becomes a *daa'k ba(h)g*. 194

Consonant Shifts

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Voiced *th* (as in *then*) > *d*

Addo', anudduh, dat, den, dey dey (right there), boddduh, todduh (t'other), demself.

Voiceless *th* (as in *thin*) >t, either initial or final.

T'ick, t'in, t'ing, t'ink, t'ief, t'irty, t'istle, t'irteen, t'row, t'roat, t'ree, t'rough.

Eart' (or yut'), bre't', fait', trut', teet', lat' (lathe), pat', wut (worth).

r > *h*

Bittle (victuals), beabuh, bee-hibe, Benus (sometimes Wenus), behabe, berry (sometimes werry) 'ceebin (deceiving), grabe, hebby, driber, drobe, Ebe, ebenin', fabuh, leabe, lib', libe, febuh, fibe, fiabuh, glub, moobe.

v > *w*

Wenus (sometimes Benus), werry (sometimes berry), Nowembuh, puhwidin', puhwiduh, puhwishun, puhwoke, puhwokin', waa'mint (varmint), wegetubble, westibule (of vestibule limited train), wictoria, wine, wineguh, wisit.

z > *dj*

Medjuh, pledjuh, pledjuhr'um (pleasure him or them), tredjuh, tredjuruh.

R, of course, drops* or softens to *h*, except intervocalically as in *tredjuruh*, and *fuhr'um*, for *fuh um* (for them).

Final *d* or *t* is dropped or slurred:* Bandon' (abandoned), Babtis', buss', fiel'-han'.

An initial *n* is added before *u* (with a vanishing *y* sound), as in Newinted States, Nyankee, nyung, nyounges', nyuse, nyuzen' (usen't).

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*As always in the best company, R's are seen and not heard.
*Likewise in general usage.

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193 Preceded by a vowel an initial *y* sound is added to *i*
194 and *e*. Thus *iz* and *ent* become *yiz* and *yent*. *Him is*, but *'e yiz; him ent*, but *'e yent; 'e yeye red.*.

Initial *s* is dropped in the hard consonant combinations *sc, sp, sk, st.*

'Cratch, 'crape, 'kin, 'corch, 'tan, 'tink, 'take, 'tir, 'top, 'ting, 'tep, 'ticky, 'traight, 'tring, 'tretch-out, 'tir, 'pin, 'pat, 'pit, 'plash, 'pend, 'tore.

Prefixes

193 Most one-syllable prefixes are dropped, as *at-, o-, ap-, e-, re-, op-, ad-, ex-, dis-, as-, con-*, etc.

'Ten, 'tenshun (for attend or intend, attention, intention), 'pinion (opinion), 'pint, 'pintment (appoint, appointment), 'pistle (epistle), 'jeck' (reject, object), 'tack, 'tagnhnize (antagonize), 'mirashun (admiration), 'scusshun (excursion), 'spishun, 'spize, 'splain, 'spon', 'spose (suppose, expose), 'spute, 'stonish, 'stead'ub (instead of), 'stracted, 'struckshun (construction, destruction).

The prefix *re-* is the favorite, being sometimes retained when the others are dropped, and frequently being substituted for other less euphonious prefixes:

Recishun (for decision); refen' (defend), remonia (pneumonia), renite (unite), repeah (appear), repose (oppose), resplain (explain), refen ('fen', defend). "Anoint" becomes *'nint*, but the pastor is the *Lord's renointed.*

Survivals (Archaisms)

192 *Fo'punce* and *seb'npunce chickens*, to indicate the size of a chicken sold for those amounts before the Revolutionary War.

Coz, cuz, or *cuzn* as a form of address, like the Elizabethan "cox".

Jook in the sense of jab or jabbed.

Tittie or *tittuh* for sister.

Toad for a young female dog.

Tosey, as a diminutive of "toad," as a humorous nickname for man or woman.

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Tetch, for remnant. "T'engk Gawd, 'e lef' uh leetle tetch een de bottle."

Tas' (*task*), one hundred and five feet square, one quarter of an acre, the daily task on sea-island cotton plantations.[a] Used now as either a measure of area or of distance. "My gun kin shoot two tas'," i.e. 210 feet or 70 yards.

Use in the sense of "frequent certain feeding grounds, be accustomed to go, linger habitually about."[b]

Yowe for ewe.

Frail, to strike, to beat.

Ax for ask."

Piggin, a small cedar pail with one panel extended for a handle.

Pyo' for "pure," in the sense of "fully, absolutely"; modern slang, "nothing else but": *de pyo' nutt'n*.

Staa't-naked, instead of "stark-naked."[c]

Quile for coil.

Find, in the sense of "to supply with victuals." "Buh Sun promise Buh Fowl-hawk fuh fine um een bittle effn 'e ketch 'im een 'im baid."

Quills, still used for pipes of reed or cane.

Shote, for young hog.

Killick, for "killock," an anchor of stone.

Gaul for swamp.

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[a] Mr. Bennett explains a "task" as one-half an acre for a hoe hand; three-quarters of an acre for a cotton-field hand; one-quarter of an acre for a rice-field hand. Thus a man and his family can *cut a tas; tie a tas, an' carry a tas intuh de flat*. From this comes the phrase, a *done-tase niggah*, for a worn out laborer, too weak or too old to work; or lightly, for the laughing darkey, his day's work done and his hoe canted over his shoulder. I. 343.

[b] Widely employed throughout the South by both white and black, usually as a hunting term in connection with doves, partridges, and turkeys. Dignified Elizabethan. Compare Spenser's "Where never foot did use", and Milton's Lycidas,

"Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use,
Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks."

Listed along with *quile* (coil) and *gaum* as colloquial white usage by Charles Foster Smith in "Southern Dialect in Life and Literature," *The Southern Bivouac*, Nov., 1885.

[c] Good Chaucerian and Caxtonian; standard English till 1600; still used in the Midland and Southern Dialects in England; and in general much easier and pleasanter to say than "ask".

[d] It is barely possible (but highly improbable) that *staa't* goes back to the older "start" (steort), tail.

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192 [278] *Hippo* for ipecac, probably from the dialect of the cockney English sailors who fetched it home from the Brazils. The British pharmacopoeia of 1725 calls it "hippocachuana, hippechachuana, hippo for short."

Gaum (or *gorm*), to daub or smear with spilled victuals and grease; similarly *gaumandize* (*gormandize*) not to eat greedily, but to daub or to spatter oneself with food.

Proper Names (Onomatopeia)

192 825 *Bloody noun*, the big swamp bull-frog.

Fry-bakin' frog, the small pond-frog, supposed to say "fry bacon," "tea-table."

Higgukri-kee and *Cuckatoo*, both being terms for the great horned owl.

192 *Nickuhdemus*, *Buhrabbus*, and *Polydo'*, all favorite, mouth-filling names, common in sermons and religious arguments: "Ent de Scriptuh say een de fo'teen chaptuh een Nickuhdemus, dat de lab'ruth wut' 'e hire?"

Rebus is of unknown origin, being coupled only with Revelation, meaning from Alpha to Omega: "Uh bin t'ru da' t'ing frum Rebus spang to Rebelashun."

[825] *Po'Jo*, the long-legged, long-necked Blue Heron.

Popular Etymologies

Consecrate lye (*concentrated*);* *middle-night*, *middle-day*, *middle-blouse*, for mid-night, mid-day, middy-blouse; *inflummashun*, for information; *sparruhgrass* for asparagus;* *Sawlketchum* for Salkahatchie, a tide-water river of South Carolina, for which the commoner corruption among the whites is "Saltcatcher"; *preecher on de sukkus* (circuit); *locus preechuh* (local preacher); *petty-* or *patty-auguh* for piragua, pirogue; *Saa'bint Day* (Servant's day) confused with Sabbath Day; *muffle-dice* for hermaphrodite; *grin' salt*, said of a hawk or vulture circling aloft; *carryin'* for carrion; *peach omelet* for peach marmalade; *curly flower* for cauliflower;* *Florida lime* for chloride of lime; *sweet religion* for sweet alyssum;* *nutten-aigs* for nut-megs.

*Not exclusively Gullah; commonly found elsewhere.

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192 538 In connection with *nutten-aigs* Mr. Bennett vouches for an anecdote which is almost too good to be true: In a certain house in Charleston, dessert came on the table, looking and tasting peculiar. "Judy," said the mistress, "What is the matter with this pudding? Did you put three eggs in it?"

"Yas, missus, me yiz. Yo' tell me fuh tek t'ree aig; dey yunt bin no hen-aig, so me yiz tek de nutt'n-aigs."

Words

192 There are curiously few survivals of native African words in Gullah, a fact that has struck most students of the language.[a] The commonest are the exclamation *ki* (or *kai*) to express wonder or to add emphasis to a statement, and *buckra* for white man, both, however, being widely found elsewhere. To these may be added *nyam*, *oona*, *swanga* (or *swongger*), *du-du*, *goober*, *pinder*, *cooter*, *okra*, *geechy*, *cymbi*, *bakalingo* (obsolescent), *guffer*, *penepne*, *da*, *da-da*. *Malafee* for whiskey has been noted on St. Helena Island.[b] Mrs. Christensen records several African phrases or formulas in her stories.[c] Two words that have not been traced to any known source, and which may be African in origin, are *Stepney* and *Plat-eye*. *Stepney* is

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[a] Parsons, *Folk Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina*, Intro., XXI. Bennett, I, 338.

George Philip Krapp, "The English of the Negro," *American Mercury*, June, 1924, p. 193.

In Professor Krapp's opinion the English of the Negro has not retained a trace of native African speech, and has added only a few words to the language, such as *voodoo*, *hoodoo*, and *buckra*. "Generalizations are always dangerous," he continues, "but it is reasonably safe to say that not a single detail of Negro pronunciation or of Negro syntax can be proved to have any other than an English origin."

[191] Of Gullah in particular he says: "The Gullah dialect is a very much simplified form of English, with cases, numbers, genders, tenses reduced almost to the vanishing point. Many of the grammatical and phonetic characteristics that appear in other jargons, Beach-la-Mar, Pidgin English, and Chinook, are found also in Gullah. Very little of the dialect, however, perhaps none of it, is derived from sources other than English. In vocabulary, in syntax, and in pronunciation, practically all of the forms of Gullah can be explained on the basis of English, and probably only a little deeper delving would be necessary to account for those characteristics that still seem strange and mysterious."

[b] Parsons, *Folk Lore of the Sea Islands*, Intro., XXI.

[539] [c] "Sarsey Bey eum blunda!
Tung eum blunda!
(From the story of the "Cooter an' Deer".)

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192 used in the sense of hunger or want, or like the proverbial wolf: "Haffuh wu'k haa'd fuh keep Stepney frum de do'."
[715] *Plat-eye* signifies a ghastly and ghostly night apparition which it is extremely dangerous, even fatal, to meet or see, common to the Georgetown section of the coast. *Plat-eye prowl* is the vivid phrase for the depth of night when it is ill to be abroad.

Gullah English is full of picturesque, interesting words and phrases. Consider, for example, the following: *schemy; speckly; settle' 'ooman*, a woman of a certain age, not a flapper; *newfanglety; disgustuss; foot* for leg: "Deer hab long foot, him run fas'; Cootuh hab shawt foot, him trabble slow"; *buckra*, white man, then simply "white," as *buckra yam*, white potato, *buckra chalk*, white chalk; *altwo*, both, each; *peruse*, to saunter, walk slowly, "Da' gal him bin peruse 'long de road, en 'e nebbuh study 'bout nutt'n"; *ractify*, first "to break," as "Da' buggy ractify," then "to become confused" (mentally), "Da' 'ooman ractify een 'e min' "; *gunjuh* (from gingerbread), the scalloped molasses cakes sold in stores; *Mass, Mas*, (Master) when used with the name: *Mass' John, Mass' Rafe; maussuh* when used without the name, as "Da' muh maussah";" also *Maussuh Jedus*, but *Mastuh* for God alone. *Ox*, plural, "two ox"; *oxin*, singular, "one oxin." *Specify*, to make *good*, usually in the negative *cyan' specify*, can't make good; of a poor wife, "she cyan' specify"; of trousers, "de britchiz bus', 'e yent specify."

Quizzit, to ask, to question.

[535] *To shout*, not used of exclamation or outcry but of a peculiar religious dance" of the primitive Negro Christians

[539] Whoga, whoga, whogaler, da humbarnorta, sundundilly?
Coo me sormber norty sundundilly lulclarun.
("De Tiger an' de Nyung Lady.")

Olawia! Olawia!
Odatle-tle-tie!
(De Wolf, de Rabbit an' de Whale's Eggs.)

"'Mass' Sam tell we ol' Maussa say, 'Sen' Mass' Henry bat-o home."
Bennett, II, 6.

[533] "For an exposition of the "shout song" see Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, Preface, 32-35; and for a first-hand description see *Slave Songs of the United States*, XII-XV, taken from the N. Y. *Nation*, May 30, 1867.
Compare Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, Harvard University Press, 1925, p. 269.

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marked by ecstatic motion and hysterical physical rhythms.

Too in the sense of "very."

Sometime, inconstant, unsure: "Dem nyoung gal is a sometime t'ing."

Nyam, in the sense of eat."

Lahgin', and *swongger*, to assume self importance, to put on airs. Both of these seem pure Negro, unless the first is from 'largin', enlarging (?); and the second from swagger, compare swank.

Mongkey-nut for cocoa-nut, probably from the resemblance of the hairy nut to a brown monkey's head.

Soon for early, as a *soon brukwuss*, a *soon staa't*, a *soon man*. Thence, as noted by Mr. Bennett,[33] arises the first division of the Negro's day; *soon er mo'nin'*; after which follows *fus' fowl-crowin'*, *day-clean*, *sun-up*, *fus' an' las' ho'n blowin'*, *fo'noon res'*, *attanoon*, *de sun duh lean*, *de sun duh lean fuh down*, *sun-down*, *deep-dus'*, *ebenin'*, *can'le-lightin'*, *night-time*, *platt-eye prowl*, and *hag-hollerin'*."[34]

Phrases

Crack 'e bret' (or *crack 'e teet'*), crack his breath or teeth, i.e., say something.

Long-mout', surly or contemptuous pushing out of lips.

Shut-mout' (adj.) or *tie up 'e mout'* (verb), secretive, ill-natured, not saying anything.

Onrabble 'e mout', unravel his mouth, i.e., loosen up in conversation.

W'ich en' w'y talk, which and why talk, i.e., contradictory, inconsistent talk.

She-she talk, used of feminine loquacity. This phrase looks, by the way, like a correct use of the feminine gender,

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[33] Mr. Williams' suggestion is that *nyam* comes from *yam letter* (yam potato) with intrusive *n* before *y* sound. Williams, *De Ole Plantation*, *VI*. An improbable derivation. Professor W. A. Craigie derives it from African *nyam*—to eat: *n'yam*—food, and compares Portuguese African *iguame*—the yam.

[34] I, 342.

[35] Midnight. Hags are witches, and platt-eyes diabolical spirits of the mist. *Loc cit.*, 343.

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192 but Mr. Gonzales sees in it an onomatopoetic origin, deriving it from the whispering frou-frou of silken petticoats."

Gwinin' en' gwinin', goings-on and goings-on.

Trus'-me-Gawd (I trust my God), the appropriate name for the cranky, easily-overturned dugout canoe.

Praise-meetin', prayer meeting."

Fuh sowl, a strong phrase, for true, for truth: "'Ee fat fuh sowl."

'Ent wut' (isn't, aren't worth), in the general sense of worthless, of no account: "Him ent wut'."

Mo' bettuh, mo' longuh, double comparative for better and longer.

Mores', most.

To cut de green calabash, to exaggerate, to draw the long bow (calabash is a gourd).

To pull wool, to grasp the small twisted forelock and to bow.

Bline Gawd, blind God, personal idol or fetich.

Fin'lly at las', a full phrase for at last.

Juntleman (gentleman), used for the regular and lawful husband, and similarly, *lawfully lady*, for a Negro's legally-married wife, in both cases "Withouten oother compaignye in youth," as Chaucer said.

Tek um an' tanky, (Take it [or them] and thank you), I took it gladly and was (am) grateful.

Dat buckra (or *nigguh*) *eye bigger dan 'e belly*, (i.e., he wants more than he should, is greedy).

Fuh gone hook-han', To walk arm in arm.

Lay down yo' mammy haa't (heart) *an' tek up yo' daddy*, have courage, be a man.

Clap-hat-bitch, a woman sudden and hasty in speech and deed, a virago.

A swinge (singed) *cat, an ash cat*, of wretched, ill-seeming, unprepossessing appearance.

Concerning a safety-match, which would strike nowhere except on the box, a darkey was heard to remark, "Mas

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"The *Black Border*, p. 284.

"Mrs. Parsons notes that on St. Helena Island, the little cabin churches are called "praise-houses." *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands*, etc., p. 205.

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192 Bob, dat's a regular Baptis' match—'e wunt bow 'e head in none but 'e own house,"—referring to the Close Communion of the Baptists.

802 The ordinals, second, third, etc., are expressed by *two-time*, *three-time*, etc., or simply by the cardinals, as *two Chucsday*, *two T'ursday*, *two place*, the "second Tuesday, Thursday, place."

Proverbs

538 Tek care bettuh mo'nuh baig paa'd'n (To take care is better than to beg pardon), An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

If yo play wid puppy, 'ee lick yo face, Familiarity breeds contempt.

Cut finguh 'f'aid axe, A burnt child dreads the fire.

A still calf git de mores' milk.

Long talk ketch run'way nigguh.

Slow walkin' mek quick lickin'.

Yaas, bubbuh, uh haa'kee, but uh yent yeddy (Yes, brother, I hearken but I don't hear, i.e., I hear what you are saying, but I'm not paying any attention to it).

T'ief is bad, but t'ief en' ketch iz de debble (To steal is bad, but to steal and get caught is the devil).

Little axe cut down big tree."

Ef yo ent hab hoss to ride, ride cow, Half a loaf is better than no bread.

'E yent matter 'bout de road, so long as 'e kah yo to de right place.

A good dog fuh ebryt'ing is good fuh nutt'n (Jack of all trades, master of none).

Po' buckra an' dog walk one pat' (The poor man and the dog walk the same path).

Mos' kill bud don't make soup (Most killed bird don't make soup).

A man ain't eny more dan a man (i.e., there's a limit to all things).

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(554) "Mr. Gonzales describes an insignificant-looking darkey, Little Joe Fields, whose only claim to distinction was the fact that he was the father of twin boys. When ridiculed on account of his small size, Joe would swell with importance, grin expansively, and retort: "Ki! Little axe cut down big tree! You see dem two twin, enty? Dem duh *my own*."

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SPIRITUALS

S33 The Gullahs abundantly possess the characteristic Negro gifts of rhythm, quick emotionalism," and harmony. From these, music inevitably comes. They sing many kinds of songs,—work-songs, boat-songs," shout-songs, and spirituals, but the spirituals, or prayer-songs, outrank in number and interest all other varieties.

As might be expected from background and environment, the spirituals of the low-country Negroes are like those found elsewhere, except that they are more primitive in quality, more fluid and less standardized, ruder in text, more pathetic in tone, and more plaintive in music.

Each time a spiritual is sung it is a new thing. Rarely does one hear a spiritual sung twice in exactly the same way. It is not static or final, but dynamic and growing, for it is the creature of oral tradition" and fully exemplifies every possibility of variation associated with oral tradition and communal transmission.

New spirituals are constantly being made," either by

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(152) (113) "For an early description of the frenzy of emotionalism reached by Negroes in singing a favorite spiritual like "Jesus said He wouldn't die no mo'," see Elizabeth Kilham, "Sketches in Color, IV," *Putnam's Magazine*, March, 1870, pp. 307 and 308.

"Two good boat-songs, as well as a spiritual, a gospel hymn, and a miscellaneous song (all with words and music), are to be found in Marcellus S. Whaley, *The Old Types Pass*, Christopher Publishing Co., Boston, 1925.

(113) "At least it was in the past, before the Negro folk-tradition came in for the wide attention it is now receiving both in sociology, music, and published criticisms. See Margaret Widdemer's, "Gathering Treasures Among Negro Folk Songs," *The Literary Digest International Book Review*, June, 1926, pp. 425, 426, for a convenient and sane review of four recent publications: Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, Harvard University Press; Emmet Kennedy, *Mellows*, Boni and Liveright; James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, The Viking Press; Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, University of North Carolina Press. Since her review, two other books have been added to the contemporary list: James Weldon Johnson, *The Second Book of Negro Spirituals*, The Viking Press, 1926; William Arms Fisher, *Seventy Negro Spirituals*, Oliver Ditson Co., 1926. Mr. Fisher's twelve-page introduction is particularly valuable for its scholarly exposition of the history of the spirituals in American music.

"Compare the statement of Professors Odum and Johnson (*Negro Workaday Songs*, University of North Carolina Press, 1926, p. 198): "There seems to be an impression abroad to the effect that the making of Negro spirituals stopped long ago. On the contrary, it is quite probable that more spirituals are being made today than during the days of slavery."

Mr. Fisher is undeservedly hard on recent examples: "In both texts and music the post-war Spirituals lack the elemental vigor, directness, naturalness and spontaneity of the earlier songs. The texts have become sophisticated and the music debased by that hybrid white American product—the gospel hymn." *Seventy Negro Spirituals*, VIII.

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533 individuals" or by groups, spontaneously. The latter method is the more interesting because it is one of the rare contemporary situations where communal composition may be observed actually at work: An emotionally charged atmosphere (as religious worship regularly charges it among all but the most sophisticated Negroes) a striking, rhythmic phrase from preacher, leader, or worshiper, and the thing is done. One of the most beautiful of recent spirituals was a spontaneous outburst of petition to the great "Maussa" after the terrific cyclone of 1911 in South Carolina, built around the refrain-appeal, "Lord, don' let de win' blow here no mo'."[9] And during the World War a similarly tense situation produced a like result. As described by a Negro worshiper on that occasion: "Somebody shout out, 'O Lord, we gwine 't'row dat Kizer down,' an' den somebody else catch 'em an' t'row 'em back, an' befo' you know it de whole chu'ch was a-rockin' an' a-prayin'. It was a gran' hymn."[10]

Many of the simplest and most beautiful of the spirituals are cast in this form: that is, a striking leading line with choral repetition and variations. Frequently the words are crude, childish, and inconsequential, but usually both melody and harmony, especially harmony, are rhyth-

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[9] The same authorities (*Ibid.*, p. 189) describe individual authorship as follows: "Among the lowly Negro folk of the South the making of spirituals is still a reality. Every community has its 'composers'. Often they are supposed to possess some special gift of the 'spirit'. From sermon, prayer, and crude folk wisdom they draw ideas and inspiration for their compositions. Sometimes the results are pathetic, but not infrequently there springs up a song which would compare favorably with the old spirituals."

See, also, Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, Preface, 21.

[10] See Ballanta, *Saint Helena Island Spirituals*, No. 39.

[11] Two similar instances are thus described by Odum and Johnson (*The Negro and His Songs*, p. 32): "A Negro preacher recently reached a climax in his discourse in the phrase, 'Oh, with the wings of the morning, I'd fly to that heavenly land.' He repeated this a number of times and made gestures with his arms suggestive of flying. His black robe added to the forcefulness of the suggestion and the impression became a part of the song of that church. . . . If a single personality dominates the whole in an expression that appeals to the present sense of fitness, he is the author of a new song. For example, a visiting minister once shouted out during such a scene: 'Oh, the hearse-wheel a-rollin' an' the graveyard opening—ha, ha,' but got no further, for his refrain was taken up by the chorus, and the next day saw a new version of the well-known song."

(113) See, also, the origin of the song, "O, de ole nigger-driver!" as described by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Negro Spirituals," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1867, pp. 692, 693. It is from this article that the beautiful "Lay dis body down" spiritual is quoted on page 39.

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533 mic, plaintive and beautiful. And sometimes the words themselves, at least the leading phrases, possess a naive appeal and essential poetic power.

533 539 Here are some of the most characteristic:

See God's Angel comin' down
To see Gawd's bleedin' Lam'.

Dark cloud risin', it looks like rain,
The sun drawin' water from Emanuel's veins,
(Wheel, wheel, wheel, O wheel my Lord.)

I want to die easy when I die.

Looka how dey done muh Lawd;
(Never spoke a mumblin' word,
Mumblin' word.)

I ain't gwine grief muh Lawd no mo'.

Oh de blood done sign mah name.

When I git in heben in my elbow chair,
Then I will rock like angel rock,
(T'ank Gawd I git obuh Jerdan.)

Jesus, when dis whole worl' on fire.

O Death, ain't you gots no shame?

I know moon-rise, I know star-rise,
Lay dis body down.
I walk in de moonlight, I walk in de starlight,
To lay dis body down.
I'll walk in de grave-yard, I'll walk through de grave-yard,
To lay dis body down.
I'll lie in de grave and stretch out my arms;
Lay dis body down.
I go to judgment in de evenin' of de day,
When I lay dis body down;
And my soul and your soul will meet in de day
When I lay dis body down.

533 198 814 In particular, the low-country spirituals have been fortunate in having two distinctly preservative influences exerted on them. The first is the Charleston Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, an organization composed of the leading men and women of Charleston, all of whom

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533 belong in the plantation tradition. They have studied the
178 spirituals long and carefully at first hand, have learned
814 them orally from groups of Negro plantation singers, and sing them seriously, feelingly, and sympathetically. Students of Negro music who know the facts are unanimous in the opinion that their rendition is accurate, dignified, and artistic."

533 The second influence came from a movement to get the
178 Negroes themselves to see the racial importance and native
517 worth of the spirituals and hence to continue to sing them, instead of discarding them as something vaguely to be ashamed of, in favor of printed collections of the white race.

[871] This influence has been particularly effective on St. Helena Island, through the instrumentality of the Penn Normal, Industrial and Agricultural School, which has exerted an extensive influence on the large Negro population of that island.[162] In regard to the spirituals, the most important result, next to the continued singing of the spirituals by the island Negroes, is the recent publication of the words and music of 113 of the finest low-country spirituals."

533 This is the work of N. G. J. Ballanta, himself a Negro from Sierra Leone. Possessing as he does both musical scholarship and a native African background, he is unusu-

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[179] "Following are two interesting opinions on the subject of the white people's singing of spirituals. The latter opinion is the more accurate: "Carl Van Vechten writing in *Vanity Fair* about these songs declared it as his opinion that white singers cannot sing them, and that women, with few exceptions, should not attempt to sing them at all. . . . I agree that white singers are, naturally, prone to go to either of two extremes: to attempt to render a Spiritual as though it were a Brahm's song, or to assume a 'Negro unctuousness' that is obviously false, and painfully so. I think white singers, concert singers, can sing Spirituals—*if they feel them.*" Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, pp. 28, 29.

Compare the remark of a Negro woman quoted by Miss McKim (*Slave Songs of the United States*, XXIII) concerning how a spiritual should be sung: "It can't be sung widout a *full heart and a troubled sperrit.*"

[162] "St. Helena has a population of approximately 6,000 Negroes and 60 white people. The Penn School, founded during the War Between the States, was the first school for Negroes in the South supported by Northern funds. It has been brought to a high degree of efficiency by Miss Rossa B. Cooley, who went there in 1903. It dominates the island settlement and has had a tremendous influence upon it, so much so that the St. Helena Negroes are considerably above their racial average in most ways.

"*St. Helena Island Spirituals*, G. Schirmer, Inc., 1925.

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ally well equipped to deal authoritatively with Negro spirituals."

It is interesting to note that he traces the musical form of the spirituals directly back to African sources. "It is true," he says, "that in a great many instances one may meet with spirituals which actually are arrangements of strains of Hymn tunes, and especially so is this the case with present-day religious productions of the Negro; but it is also true that although there are evidences of the effect of the environment of the American Negro, yet these evidences are overbalanced by others which go to prove the African origin of these Negro Spirituals. . . .

"No one who has been in Africa and has heard the music of the Africans would doubt the sincerity of the statement that the characteristics of the music of the American Negro could be traced to an African stem."[*]

This seems an accurate statement of the case. It is much nearer the facts than the oft-quoted opinion of Booker T. Washington, that the spirituals are products of slavery."[†] They are products of slavery in the same sense though not in the same degree that they are products of Christianity. That is, both Christianity and slavery had a share in their make-up and undoubtedly were factors, but the real basis and structure are African. The part slavery played was to add intensity and poignancy to the native racial pathos and yearning, while Christianity furnished a remarkably appropriate and vivid background of concrete imagery, concepts, characters, and ideas." But back

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[*] Dr. Frank Damrosch wrote of him: "He is undoubtedly doing fine work in arousing an interest in African music. He is, so far as I know, the only one who is competent to do this work." *St. Helena Island Spirituals*, Intro., IV.

[†] *Ibid.*, Foreword, VI. Compare James Weldon Johnson's somewhat parallel view, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, Preface, 29-37, and H. E. Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs*, G. Schirmer, 1914.

[‡] "They glow with the hope that the children of bondage will ultimately pass out of the wilderness of slavery into the land of freedom. In singing of a deliverance which they believed would surely come, with bodies swaying with the enthusiasm born of a common experience and of a common hope, they lost sight for a moment of the auction block, of the separation of mother and child, of sister and brother. . . . ." S. Coleridge-Taylor, *Transcriptions of Negro Melodies*, Preface.

"For an excellent expression on this point see Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, Preface, 20, 21. The whole preface is well worth reading. In it, however, and in the Preface to *The Second Book of American Spirituals* as well, there are occasional lapses from [illegible] interpretation into stone-throwing. This, for example, [illegible] 11. 18, in connection with the

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533 of both Christianity and slavery lie first, the native racial
567 characteristics which were the really creative factors in
114 the spirituals; and second, the particular environment
178 which alone of all possible localities has called them into
171 being." This combination created them; Christianity shaped and molded them; slavery lent fervor.

As to their sadness, long after the War and Emancipa-
533 tion even to the present day, the same yearning note has
152 persisted in Negro music. As two scholarly authorities
178 have well put it: "Slavery has passed, six decades of lib-
567 erty for the slave people have signalized the better civilization, and there still remains among the Negroes the same emotional nature, the same sad, plaintive, beautiful, rhythmic, sorrow-feeling in their songs."[112] On internal evidence it is impossible to date the spirituals. Those of 1880-1900 sound like those of 1840-1860.

Likewise in the prolific "Blues"[113] and the many songs
533 of jail, chain-gang, prison, and lonesomeness," which are
152 distinctly modern in composition, there is the same sad
(522) appealing note, with much self-pity. There is also, be it said in passing, a good deal of humor, which is the complement, not the opposite, of pathos.

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(529) scarcity of spirituals based on the birth or infancy of Christ: "The reason may be due in part to the fact that the anniversary of the birth of Christ was not, in the South, in any sense a sacred or religious holiday. Up to within recent years, at least, it has been celebrated chiefly with gunpowder and whiskey. It has there been the most secular, even the most profane of all holidays. In slavery times it was the one day on which the slaves were given a sort of freedom. The liberty of coming and going was greatly enlarged. On many plantations whiskey was distributed. The day was one given over to a good time; to singing, dancing and visiting; to guzzling, gluttony and debauchery. It is possible that it was a conscious part of the scheme of slavery to make Christmas a day on which the slaves through sheer excess of sensuous pleasure would forget their bonds."

[112] "With the exception of a few statements here and there, like the following, the importance of environment has usually been overlooked: "If there is anything 'racial' about the spirituals and the blues, then there should be immediate ability to catch the intricate rhythm on the part of Negroes from Jamaica, Zanzibar, and Sierra Leone. Such is not the case, and we must conclude that they are the products of a certain American environment: The South. They are American folk-songs, built around Anglo-Saxon religious concepts." George E. Schuyler, "Correspondence," *The Nation*, July 14, 1926, p. 38.

(113) [113] Odum and Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, p. 19.

[113] See the chapters on "Blues" and "Songs of Jail, Chain Gang, and Policemen" in Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, the chapter on "Blues" in Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, and W. C. Handy, *Blues, An Anthology*. A. and C. Boni, N. Y., 1926.

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Nor must it be forgotten that the Negro is both a splendid actor and a born dramatist: he dramatizes a situation concretely and vividly, and dramatizes himself and his own feelings with equal facility.

All of these factors are to be taken into consideration when dealing with the origin of the spirituals.

But however originated and compounded, spirituals constitute one of the most distinctive additions of the Negro to the culture of America. A leading Negro publicist" sums up his race's contributions somewhat as follows: the cakewalk, jazz music, the animal folk-tale, the Blues, and the spirituals. In the minds of many the greatest of all are the spirituals.

"James Weldon Johnson.

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CONCLUSION

178 538 (533) Of course there is much in the Gullah tradition that has already passed beyond recall, and much that is passing with this generation for lack of suitable recorders. "Hymns, songs, folk-stories, animal-myths, fables, aphorisms and proverbs, wit and humor, it has, and a great mass of unrecorded folk-lore, legend and tradition, preserved in this unstudied dialect like flies in amber; there are, peculiar to it, certain Rabelaisian *contes ridicules*, told in cabins with wild mirth," *histoires satyriques*, and ghastly *legendes macabres*," besides which the uncanny tales of Hoffman are puerile in power to chill, but harder to get at than the things banned by the Great Tabu.""

It is all interesting—superstitions, folk-lore, tales, songs, and dialect—and the literature that enshrines the Gullah tradition will always remain a significant chapter in the great book of human life.

000 As an example of the dialect itself there may be quoted

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509 (83) (171) "Told to white people (only to men of course) rarely except under the loosening urge of whiskey, on special occasions such as a hunting or fishing expedition. The experience of Mrs. Elsie Clews Parsons on St. Helena Island in searching for material of this kind is both interesting and illuminating. She says: "The more or less obscene turns occurring now and then in the Bahaman tales are quite lacking in Carolina, whether as a result of natural indifference to the obscene or of greater sophistication, it is somewhat difficult to estimate. In the deliberate suppression of certain tales or 'toasts', as drinking-verses are called in both the Sea Islands, and the Bahamas, the sophistication is plain enough. 'Some is so evil, I don' like to go t'rough wid 'em;' said one who failed to tell me the many 'toas' ' he had boasted of knowing. Tale No. 78, 'Man Under the Bed,' a variant of the well-known European tale of 'The Woman and the Friar', is one of the commonest of Bahaman tales. One day I happened to ask Mr. Jack if he knew it. 'Oh, you want dem kin' o' tales too! I could tell you a heap o' dem tales, but I blush fo' you,' he said. 'You must not,' I rejoined, 'for it is my business to take down all kinds of tales, no matter what they are about, and just as they are.' Finally, out of the 'heap o' dem tales', he told me the very tale I had referred to, as well as one other tale of which a variant is familiar on Andros Island, 'The Three Sweet-hearts,' (No. 77). James Murray said that he knew twenty-five or thirty 'man's tales'; 'but,' added he, and too firmly for challenge, 'I wouldn' go t'rough wid 'em.' Artistic story-teller as he was, he would forego part of the point of a story rather than commit the moral impropriety of telling it. 'I leave it dere,' he would say. White story-writers, like Harris or Jones or Christensen, have left it there, too, I infer. Indeed, Mrs. Christensen has told me that, faithful recorder as she was, on this point she had been selective: the stories she found 'vulgar' she had not taken." *Folk-Lore of the Sea-Islands*, Preface, XX, XXI.

A hint of the latent vulgar possibilities is found in the *double-entendre* riddles Nos. 29, 30, 31, 32 (pp. 154, 157), on which Mrs. Parsons makes no comment.

"One of which Mr. Bennett has himself brilliantly re-created in *Madame Margot*, The Century Co., 1921.

"Bennett, II, 52.

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As an example of the dialect itself there may be quoted in conclusion Mr. Gonzales' record of a colored husband's description of the way the woman manages the man. It is a fable in lighter vein. The devil acts as interlocutor.

"One time, Debble meet 'Ooman duh paat'. Debble is uh berry mannussuble man wid 'Ooman, so, w'en 'e shum 'e t'row 'e tail obuh 'e na'm, same lukkuh 'e bin cloak, en' mek'um uh berry stylish bow. De 'Ooman toss 'e head, 'e grin, 'e ketch 'e frock by de bottom wid alltwo 'e han', 'e hice'um up to 'e knee, en' 'e drap'um uh low cutchy, 'cause him en' Debble git 'long berry well, *berry* well!

"Attuh de time uh day done pass, de Debble ax de 'Ooman how 'e mek'out 'long de man; w'edduh 'e done l'aa'n how fuh manage de man, en' fetch'um to 'e han'. De 'Ooman laugh. 'Budduh,' 'e say. 'Hukkuh you kin ax me dat? Enty you l'aa'n me how fuh 'seitful? Enty you show me how fuh do 'um? Enty Uh folluh yo' exwice? Uh got de man gwine! 'E dunno w'ich way 'e duh gwine—but 'e gwine my way, enty?"

"'Tell me how you do'um,' de Debble say.

"'Uh got good ecknowledge how fuh fool de man. Uh got 'tring tie 'pun de man, en' w'en we git to de fawk uh de road, weh one de road lean one side, en' t'odduh road lean t'odduh side—w'en Uh git to da' place, ef Uh gwine one road, Uh pull de 'tring fuh lead de man een de t'odduh road. W'ichebbuh road Uh want, Uh pull de man een de road wuh Uh *yent* want, 'cause de stubbunt creetuh so cuntrady en' han'dhead, ef him see me foot lean fuh one road, him foot fuh lean to de t'odduh one, 'cause him t'ink man fuh hab 'e own way. Him eegnunt to dat! So dat how Uh gitt-um fuh trabble my road, en' de man nebbuh know weh 'e duh gwine, but 'e ben' 'e neck en' pull de load, jiz' ez sattify ez ox wuh done bruk!'"[1]

[1] *The Captain*, pp. 380, 381.

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